

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead

Ashford vicinity, McDowell County, MC0089, Listed 9/3/2009

Nomination by Marvin Brown

Photographs by Marvin Brown, September 2007



Façade view



Rear view

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Brown, Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English, Farmstead

other name/site number Brown Family Farm

2. Location

street & town 15956 US 221 North N/A not for publication

city or town Ashford (Marion mailing address) X vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28752

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
Name of Property

McDowell County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling – farmhouse
DOMESTIC/secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling – residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne
Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick; stone
walls weatherboard
log
roof metal
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheets for Section No. 7

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture**Period of Significance**

1916

Significant Dates

1916

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency (**NC Department of Transportation**)
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository: _____

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead

Name of Property

McDowell County, NC

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 21

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

A 17 **413930** **3969300**
Zone Easting Northing

B 17 **413990** **3969130**
Zone Easting Northing

C 17 **414090** **3969220**
Zone Easting Northing

D 17 **414230** **3969010**
Zone Easting Northing

E 17 **414020** **3968900**
Zone Easting Northing

F 17 **413760** **3969100**
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown
organization URS Corporation – North Carolina date December 5, 2008
street & number 1600 Perimeter Park Drive telephone 919-461-1538
city or town Morrisville state NC zip code 27570

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Dr. Henry S. and Wilda E. Brown
street & number 15956 US 221 North telephone (828) 756-7394
city or town Marion state NC zip code 28752

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
McDowell County, North Carolina

Summary Description

A farmhouse typical of the early twentieth-century architecture of rural northern McDowell County and its surroundings, four associated outbuildings, and an intact agricultural setting comprise the Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead. The 1916 house is a boxy, frame, double-pile, one-and-a-half-story residence with subtle Queen Anne and Colonial Revival-style decorative features. The Queen Anne style is expressed at a wraparound porch supported by decoratively chamfered posts; projecting window bays; fish-scale shingles; and a fanciful roofline of sweeping porch roofs, high-hipped principal roof, and tall dormers. The classical elements of the Colonial Revival are reflected at the two-story portico, triangular pedimented front gable, hip-roofed dormers, and trabeated entry. The house's interior is neatly finished and little altered. Its most notable original features are beaded-board walls, wainscoting, pine board ceilings and floors, four-panel doors, post-and-lintel mantels, and an open-string stair that terminates upstairs and at its foot at heavy turned newel posts. Four outbuildings accompany the house. A half-dovetailed log smokehouse and similarly fashioned granary that date from the early/mid nineteenth century were likely associated with the first Brown house on the property. A barn with a mid/late nineteenth-century mortise-and-tenon core was brought to its present appearance in the early twentieth century by Henry Seawell Brown. Brown added the final extant outbuilding, a small frame garage, in the 1920s. An agricultural setting of open fields, pastures, and the rocky channel of the North Fork of the Catawba River frames the house and outbuildings. Beyond this setting are the bottomlands of the North Cove valley and the steep wooded slopes of the enclosing mountains.

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmhouse, Outbuildings, and Farm

The Brown Farmstead is located within the North Cove valley in western McDowell County. The edge of the Blue Ridge mountain chain forms the valley's western wall and the North Fork of the Catawba River and US 221 wind through its center. The North Cove valley stands about sixteen miles north of the Marion, the principal town and seat of McDowell County, and five miles south of the village of Linville Falls, which is located at the confluence of McDowell, Burke, and Avery counties. Reflecting the historically sparse settlement of North Cove and much of McDowell County, the farmstead still has a Marion mailing address, 15956 US 221 North. The crossroads communities closest to the farmstead are Ashford, near the center of the valley about one mile to the north, and North Cove near its southern tip about four miles to the south. The North Cove valley retains a number of farmhouses dating from the antebellum period through the onset of the Great Depression. Scattered modern houses, largely disconnected from the lands around them, reflect the present diminished agrarian nature of the valley and the ability of North Cove residents to travel the smooth paved surface of US 221 to jobs at nearby industrial facilities, in Marion, and beyond. Due to the steep nature of the valley's walls—the Blue Ridge Parkway runs along the crest of the mountains that rise immediately to the west—little development has ever occurred off of the valley floor.

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Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
McDowell County, North Carolina

The Brown Farmstead—which is comprised of the farmhouse, four outbuildings, and twenty-one acres of fields, pasture, and river bottom—is bordered on the northwest by US 221 and the southeast by Old Linville Highway. An entry lane runs south from US 221 to the east-facing house and the smokehouse immediately to its rear. The lane forks and becomes a farm lane past the house at the garage. Its south fork extends a short distance through an open field and scattered apple trees to the granary and, just beyond, the barn. Its east fork continues through crop and pasture land. At the farm's southeastern edge are pasture, the rocky bottomland of the North Fork of the Catawba, and Old Linville Highway.

Farmhouse –1916 – contributing

Henry Seawell Brown erected the one-and-a-half-story boxy farmhouse in 1916 of frame with weatherboard siding. It is three bays wide—with the triple windows in the projecting bays of its east-facing front façade counted as single units—and three bays deep. The two-story, gabled, west-facing rear ell and the one-story room to its south are later additions raised on the site of a former porch. The one-story room to the ell's north is original and continues to house the kitchen. Brick piers supplemented with stone infill form the house's foundation. Brick also forms its two heavily corbelled interior chimney stacks, which pierce its seam-metal roof. Pairs of hip-roofed dormers, each with paired double-hung sash, spring from the house's tall hipped roof at both of its north and south side elevations. The forward dormers are original; the ones to the rear were added about 1985 by Henry Seawell Brown's grandson and namesake, Dr. Henry S. Brown—the farmstead's current occupant and owner—to provide further light to the rear bedrooms.

A Colonial or, more precisely, Greek Revival-style trabeated arrangement of four-light sidelights and a four-light transom frame the house's principal entry, which is centered at its east front façade. Three long double-hung windows with two-over-two sash edge the three-sided bays that project on either side of the entry. Above the entry a replacement fifteen-light door leads onto a balcony.

In common with many other dwellings built in McDowell and neighboring mountain counties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the house's primary exterior adornment is focused at its porch. A full-height classical portico supported by two square columns set on brick piers shades its front entry bay. The columns stand in place of original, full-height, chamfered columns, which had deteriorated and were replaced by Dr. Brown. A spacious porch runs behind the portico and wraps around both sides of the house. It is supported by original chamfered posts and edged by railings and stick balusters. The beaded-board porch ceiling remains in place. A one-bay balcony spans the portico at the second story. Fish-scale shingles and exposed purlin ends adorn the triangular pediment above.

A two-story ell addition that incorporates part of the original one-story rear porch projects from the center of the house's rear elevation. About 1985 Dr. Brown enclosed the former rear porch and divided it into a utility room at the south and a central laundry room. He also added a north-facing bay window to the one-story, original kitchen at the house's northwest corner. Dr. Brown further added an open wooden deck to the house's rear. In the ell's upper story he placed a bathroom flanked by closets and lit by a small bay

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Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
McDowell County, North Carolina

window. (Floor plans of the two floors, drawn by Dr. Brown, depict alterations and the interior arrangement of rooms.)

The house's neatly finished interior is largely intact. The wide central hallway retains a beaded-board ceiling, walls, and wainscoting; a pine board floor; four-panel doors set in plain board surrounds; and a single-run open-string stair that terminates in a heavy turned newel post. The same original features, with the addition of varied post-and-lintel mantels, continue to adorn many of the rooms. Some of the two- and four-panel doors, which are hand-planed and appear to date from the nineteenth century, were likely salvaged from the original farmhouse, as were some of the windows. To the left (south) of the hall are two back-to-back rooms that share one of the interior chimney stacks. The intact front room on this side was originally a parlor and is now a music room. The rear room, once a bedroom, is now utilized as a study. Part of its rear (west) end has been enclosed to create a full and a half bath. A living room and, to its rear, dining room comprise the intact pair of rooms to the hall's right (north). The vigorous but unpolished finish of the post-and-lintel mantels in the four rooms, which still retain penciled guide marks, suggests they may have been locally made.

The house has four bedrooms upstairs, two flanking each side of the wide stair hall. A three-quarter-size bed stood at the end of the hall near the balcony door in the early twentieth century. It was utilized by a black farmhand named Horace Brown or, alternatively, Horace English when he was working at the North Cove farm of Mary Jane English Brown's parents. Dr. Brown salvaged the multi-light glass door onto the balcony from the early twentieth-century Women's Club building in Raleigh. The southeast, northeast, and northwest bedrooms have all retained their original functions. Dr. Brown converted an unfinished space at the southwest into a fourth bedroom about 1985 (Brown 2007).

Smokehouse – early/mid nineteenth century – noncontributing

A smokehouse that stands just behind (west of) the farmhouse is built of hewn, squared, half-dovetailed logs. It is a small, rectangular building. It has a central door, a wide overhanging gable cantilevered over its front (east-facing) façade, and a later, shed-roofed, frame addition across its rear. Due to its purely functional form and finish, it is difficult to date with any precision, but its method of construction and family tradition suggest it was erected in the early/mid nineteenth century, either by Samuel Brown, who erected the first house on the property, or his son, Samuel Seawell Brown, who greatly expanded the farm in the 1850s and 1860s (Brown 2007).

Granary – early/mid nineteenth century – noncontributing

A granary to the house's southeast is also fashioned of hewn, squared, half-dovetailed logs. A small rectangular building, it is similar in size and proportions to the smokehouse. Its gable-front roof is flush with its east-facing front façade. A door and a window are cut into the front façade, facing the farm lane that runs to its east. Due to its purely functional form and finish, it is, like the smokehouse, difficult to date with any precision. Its method of construction and family tradition suggest it was erected in the early/mid nineteenth century, either by Samuel Brown or Samuel Seawell Brown (Brown 2007).

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McDowell County, North Carolina

Barn – mid/late nineteenth and early twentieth century – contributing

A larger and taller, rectangular, gable-front barn just to the south of the granary has a mortise-and-tenon frame core that suggests it was constructed in the mid/late nineteenth century. The barn once held mules and cows in now-empty stalls that open off of either side of its open central passage, which runs east to west. The loft above once held hay to feed the livestock. Out-of-place mortises cut into in a number of the timbers suggest that they were salvaged from an earlier building. Henry Seawell Brown increased the size of the hay loft, giving the roof a more shallow pitch, during his tenure on the farm. He also added the frame sheds to either side, which he constructed from timbers salvaged from a former railroad camp located near the farmstead. The sheds still hold a hay baler, cultivator, reaper, and other early twentieth-century equipment once used on the farm (Brown 2007). With his significant changes, the barn largely appears to be an early twentieth-century building.

Garage – 1920s – contributing

In addition to the smokehouse, granary, and barn, a frame garage dating from the 1920s survives on the property, east of the farmhouse where the entry lane divides into the fork of a farm lane. It is a rectangular, one-story, one-car, frame, diagonal-board-sided building. Its gable-front roof is clad with a later-added covering of seam metal. Its paired plywood garage doors are also replacements. To one side of the garage, a pit once used for storing potatoes survives. The shed affixed to the garage's other side once held a cornstalk cutter (Brown 2007).

Setting

The outlines of an irregularly shaped hog lot are visible south of the house and west of the barn and granary, even though the lot's fence no longer stands. The hog pen is also gone, as is a log corncrib that stood outside of the lot, northeast of the granary. Also no longer extant are a log blacksmith shop, a cane mill, a hog scalding area, and a molasses mill that once stood in a rough line east of the house and west of the granary. The cane mill, hog scalding kettle, and molasses evaporator are no longer in place, but are in storage at the farm (Brown 2007).

The house and outbuildings stand near the center of the nominated property, framed by lawn, cropland, and pastures. The North Fork of the Catawba River wends its rocky way across the southeastern edge of the property. Hay, sweet corn, and vegetables are harvested from fields east of the house that once produced wheat, corn, and other grain crops. Cattle also once again graze the pastures. The property has more than forty apple trees, most of which are heirloom varieties. Some of the trees date back to the early twentieth century. Many others were added by Dr. Brown.

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Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
McDowell County, North Carolina

Summary Statement of Significance and History

In 1916 Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown erected a new house upon a portion of the farm that Henry's great-great-grandfather, Daniel Brown II, had established in McDowell County's North Cove valley at the opening of the nineteenth century. The farmhouse is significant under National Register Criterion C as an intact representative of rural architecture in northern McDowell County during the early twentieth century. Its spacious wraparound porch and boxy form; Queen Anne-style varied roofline, projecting bays, and chamfered posts; Colonial Revival-style portico and triangular pediment, hip-roofed dormers, and trabeated entry; and intact interior finishes well represent local architectural forms and styles in the early part of the century. Largely unaltered, these features retain their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Henry's ancestors constructed the farm's extant half-dovetailed log granary and smokehouse during the early/mid nineteenth century and mortise-and-tenon barn in the mid/late part of the century. Henry Seawell Brown altered and gave the barn its present appearance in the early twentieth century and added a fourth extant outbuilding, a garage, in the 1920s. The intact contemporary house and its garage, and the barn which reads as a building from the same time, contribute to the property's 1916 period of significance and are contributing buildings. The smokehouse and granary, though little altered, were erected much earlier than the three contributing buildings and therefore do not contribute to the farmstead's period of significance and are noncontributing buildings. The twenty-one acres encompassing the farmhouse and outbuildings included within the boundaries—which were historically associated with the family ownership of the farm and continue to retain fields, pastures grazed by cattle, and the rocky course of the North Fork of the Catawba—support the intact rural setting of the farmstead. The farmstead in turn is still framed by the rural North Cove valley and its forested, mountainous slopes. The farmstead therefore retains its National Register integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

History of North Cove and Surroundings

McDowell County, in which the North Cove valley and the Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead are located, was formed in 1842-1843 from Burke and Rutherford counties. Its European history and that of North Cove, however, extend back to the previous century (Fossett 1976:7). The first white pioneer entered the county's lands as early as 1730 and by the 1740s settlement had begun in the upper basin of the Catawba River. At the time of the Revolutionary War, Davidson's Fort (now Old Fort) in southern McDowell County was among the region's westernmost outposts, serving as a base for exploration and settlement of the Blue Ridge to the north and west (Fossett 1976:14). Treaties with the Cherokee, coupled with a return to stability following the end of the war, "threw open the whole mountain region to the whites, and while there had been a few isolated families in the area before 1783, settlers rushed into the region after that date" (Lefler and Newsome 1954:255).

Even prior to the Revolution, pioneers began to claim North Cove. This was not surprising, for the eight-mile-long valley was an arable oasis amidst the mountains of northern McDowell County. (While the

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elevation of the valley is generally between 1,500 and 1,600 feet, the mountains jump, within a mile and a half to its northwest and southeast, to more than 3,000 feet.) Although less than a mile broad, the cove is flat and its soils are bolstered by the North Fork of the Catawba River. In the 1770s Scotch-Irish settlers arrived in North Cove and Turkey Cove, the valley along the river to North Cove's south (Johnston 1992:5).

Settlement in North Cove and Turkey Cove was thin and scattered during the late eighteenth century. During the early nineteenth century, however, the families of a few of North Cove's early settlers, whose numbers included Robert McCall I, Henry English, and Daniel Brown II—who pioneered the Brown Farmstead site—acquired a significant percentage of the valley's land. Their descendants still own, and in some instances farm, much of the valley and occupy many of its early residences. During the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century, North Cove, Turkey Cove, and other valleys in the area were almost exclusively agricultural. Federal agricultural census figures from 1850 through 1880 indicate that North Cove's farmers raised a variety of crops, including corn, wheat, rye, and oats, as well as livestock, none of which predominated (Bureau of the Census 1850-1880).

The population of North Cove remained small in the early twentieth century. While a few families, such as the Browns, Englishes, and McCalls, had thrived in the valley in the nineteenth century, most had had a more difficult time establishing a foothold there. This was due to the valley's isolation and limited transportation facilities; its relatively narrow size and therefore limited amount of arable land; and the concentration of large tracts of land in the hands of a few families.

Early twentieth-century maps (United States Department of the Interior 1948 (reprint of 1902 map) and 1945 (reprint of 1905 map)) picture only a small number of houses in North Cove. This is not surprising, for US 221, the current principal north-south route through McDowell County, had yet to be constructed through the valley to the south. It was construction of the Clinchfield Railroad between 1905 and 1908 that was the most significant event in the early twentieth-century history of North Cove and surroundings. Trains had served southern McDowell County since the 1870s, when the Western North Carolina Railroad was extended west to Marion and Old Fort and then on to Asheville, but this line had little direct impact on North Cove (Fossett 1976:95-101). The Clinchfield Railroad, however, was extended straight down the center of the southern half of the valley, which provided an immediate and long-term outlet for its produce and timber.

The Clinchfield Railroad originated in the Charleston, Cincinnati & Chicago Railroad Company, which was organized in 1886 with the goal of connecting the coalfields of eastern Kentucky and western Virginia with the markets of the Midwest and the Southeast (Way 1931:55). Early progress was made on the northern and southern sections of the road, but the peaks and valleys of the Blue Ridge presented an impassable barrier for almost two decades. Between 1905 and 1908, the railroad was finally driven over and through the Blue Ridge where it rises just west of the Brown Farmstead. In 1909 *Manufacture's Record* stated that the part of the line east of the crest of the Blue Ridge, which overlooked and descended into North Cove through eighteen tunnels totaling more than three miles in length, was "more magnificent in engineering detail than any east of the Rocky Mountains" (quoted in Way 1931:156-157). Clinchfield

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McDowell County, North Carolina

Railroad Construction Camp No. 6 was located upon a portion of the Brown family farm, although not within the nominated acreage (Johnston 1992:136; Brown 1994).

Once the line was completed and the camp completely dismantled, the railroad—consolidated as the Carolina, Clinchfield & Ohio in 1908—provided an outlet for the goods of North Cove, Turkey Cove, and the other valleys and surrounding communities it served. For example, it carried grain from Henry Seawell Brown's water-powered roller mill and lumber from his steam-powered saw and planing mills (Johnston 1992:136; North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989:McDowell County section).

In July 1916 a great freshet, or flood, devastated western North Carolina, including North Cove. Flood waters in the valley swept buildings, people, livestock, and crops down the North Fork of the Catawba River. At the Brown Farmstead, the freshet washed away the water- and steam-powered mills, the blacksmith shop, and more than forty acres of rich river bottomland (Johnston 1992:50-51, 136; North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989:McDowell County section). As the valley recovered from the flood, mixed farming recommenced and many farmers continued to prosper. Henry Seawell Brown, for example, purchased additional land on both sides of present US 221 following the flood and expanded his farming operation (Johnston 1992:136).

The farm production of the Browns, Englishes, McCalls, and others in North Cove found expanded means of reaching markets in 1937 when US 221 was paved through the valley. Prior to that date, transportation in and out of the cove, other than on the railroad, was primarily provided by the Old Linville Road, which winds along the east side of the North Fork of the Catawba River just east of the Brown Farmstead (Johnston 1992:50-51). It is not known exactly when US 221, below its northern junction with Old Linville Road near the head of the valley, was first established. It was not in existence early in the twentieth century when the Clinchfield Railroad was under construction, but existed in some significant form in 1928, when the railroad erected an extant concrete bridge over its present alignment (United States Department of the Interior 1948 (reprint of 1902 map) and 1945 (reprint of 1905map)).

The paving of the road may have contributed to the decision of some North Cove farmers to alter their methods and increase their production. In the 1930s and 1940s, Henry Seawell Brown upgraded and mechanized his farm equipment. Under his supervision, his farm produced corn, wheat, rye, oats, and hay, sorghum cane for molasses, and apples for eating and vinegar. He also raised poultry, swine, and cattle on the property (Johnston 1992:136; Brown 1994). Similar agricultural patterns were followed at the farm of William Garvel English (1899-1993), who occupied the English family homeplace nestled into the valley's northern terminus. On the forty-eight hilly but usable acres of his more than 400-acre farm, English raised cattle and chickens, produced milk and eggs for market, and cultivated sufficient grain and produce to feed his livestock and family (Alexander 1985d).

North Cove remained sparsely populated even after the paving of US 221, however. There are no population figures for the valley, but in 1939 the residents of Woodlawn, near the southern end of Turkey Cove to the south, numbered only about fifty (Federal Writers' Project 1939:416). The community of Ashford, near the center of North Cove not far distant from the Brown Farmstead, may have had about as

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Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
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many residents. Due to the presence of a railroad depot, Ashford had two stores, two corn mills, and a post office. Two of these buildings, a store and a corn mill, still stand in the community. Their commercial functions have been usurped, however, by more modern convenience stores/gas stations in Linville Falls, North Cove, Turkey Cove, and elsewhere along US 221.

The combination of rails and a paved road led to limited industrialization near Turkey Cove, toward Marion, beginning in the 1950s. Two large industrial facilities presently stand along the tracks of the Clinchfield Railroad, the Coats-American Thread Mill, established in 1953, and the Baxter Laboratories plant (Johnston 1992:39). New industrial jobs and other employment opportunities apparently kept pace with the loss of agricultural jobs, as the number of farms and cultivated acreage in North Cove decreased. Some tourism trade has entered the valley in recent decades—a modern golf course stands near its center—but North Cove still has a limited population and retains its rural appearance and setting.

Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead History

Daniel Brown II (1756-1852), one of North Cove's pioneer settlers, arrived in the valley at the opening of the nineteenth century. In 1806 he purchased 300 acres of land, on both sides of the North Fork of the Catawba River, upon part of which the Brown Farmstead stands (North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section.) Daniel's son, Samuel (1789-1861), added property to the farm and prior to 1820 erected a dwelling, east of the farmstead's present house and outbuildings, that the family subsequently expanded. John Seawell Brown (1814-1893), Samuel's son, extended the farmstead considerably: in 1853, 1854, and 1863 he acquired land grants from North Carolina totaling 2,660 acres (Johnston 1992:7-8; North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section).

Samuel and John were among North Cove's most prominent and wealthy citizens. Slaveholders in a region in which slavery was not widespread, they were extremely prolific farmers. In 1860 Samuel's personal property, including his slaves, was valued at \$22,000. The 1850 and 1860 federal censuses reported that John and Samuel farmed over 350 acres of improved land—a substantial amount to keep in production—and owned a large amount of livestock (Bureau of the Census 1850 and 1860). In 1850, according to the census' agricultural schedule, John's holdings included 53 cattle, 32 sheep, and 105 hogs. Following the Civil War, John served terms in both the North Carolina House and Senate (North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section). In the 1860s and 1870s, he was also chairman of the county court and worked for the Western North Carolina Railroad (Johnston 1992:135).

Romulus Walter Brown (1843-1905), John's son and the next owner of the farm, was also a prominent local figure. He cultivated field crops, raised cattle and hogs, ran a water-powered corn and wheat mill, distilled whiskey and, in the 1880s and 1890s, served as a North Cove magistrate (Johnston 1992:7-8, 135). During the 1870s and 1880s, he kept upwards of 200 acres of the farm under cultivation (North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section).

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Henry Seawell Brown (1875-1949)—Romulus' son—and his wife, Mary Jane English (1878-1949), acquired the homeplace in 1889. Mary Jane's great grandfather, Henry English, had migrated to North Cove about the same time Daniel Brown did, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and established a successful farm at its northern mouth (Johnston 1992:9; Avery County Bicentennial Commission 1981:47-53; North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section). The couple lived on the farm and cultivated its land well into the twentieth century. Henry Seawell Brown invested in modern machinery, such as a reaper and threshing machine, and in 1908 rebuilt the farm's water-powered roller mill, which had burned. He also erected steam-powered saw and planning mills and a well-equipped blacksmith shop (North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section).

Clinchfield Railroad Construction Camp No. 6 occupied part of the farm between 1905 and 1908, the years the Clinchfield completed the monumental task of driving a line over and through the Blue Ridge and Honeycutt mountains (Way 1931:156-157). The camp and railroad added to the farm's success by purchasing much of its produce. The camp's facilities, located on both sides of the present route of US 221, included housing for hundreds of workers, a clinic, an engineer's office, a commissary, stables, a blacksmith shop, a sawmill, a water pump, and a steam generator. The commissary stood on the present site of the Ashford-North Cove firehouse, on the east side of US 221 southwest of the Brown Farmstead (Johnston 1992:136; Brown 1993).

In 1916 Henry and Mary Jane tore down Samuel Brown's pre-1820 log and frame dwelling and replaced it with the present farmhouse (Brown 1973, 2007). The Browns built their new house of lumber and shingles sawn at their own mill. The dwelling was briefly located near the site of the old homeplace but, before it was completed, the flood waters of the great flood of 1916 rose into it. The Browns immediately took it down and constructed it anew at its present location at a higher elevation (Brown 1993, 2007). The 1916 flood affected more than the location of the new house. After the deluge Brown continued to mechanize and raise a variety of crops. These included corn, wheat, rye, oats, and hay, sorghum cane for molasses, apples for eating and for vinegar, as well as poultry, swine, and cattle (Johnston 1992:50-51, 136; North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section). His varied activities followed in the nineteenth-century tradition of mixed agriculture practiced on the farm by earlier generations of the Brown family and other local agriculturists (Bureau of the Census 1850-1880; Brown 1993).

In 1949 both Henry and Mary Jane died. This was an important event in the history of the farm. Following the Browns' deaths, the property passed to their heirs, including son Romulus Jahue Brown, and was broken into smaller parcels divided further over time among their descendants. The house remained intact with a complement of outbuildings, but at the center of diminished acreage. Romulus' son, Dr. Henry S. Brown—a retired professor of geology at North Carolina State University—now owns the house and outbuildings and an approximately fifty-acre portion of the land historically associated with them that is divided between two lots. The house and most of its cropland and pasturage, along with the North Fork of the Catawba River, stand on the larger of the two lots (McDowell County Tax Map 1728, Block 52, Parcel 5297—approximately 47 acres) that currently comprise the farm. A smaller lot (Map 1728, Block 42, Parcel 8678—approximately three acres) extends northwest of the farmhouse to US 221.

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Dr. Brown recalls the slow arrival of modern conveniences to the farm and the surrounding region. Not until 1946, shortly before the death of his grandparents, did electricity reach the farm. Until about 1965 the house lacked telephone service, and running water did not arrive until 1966 (North Carolina Department of Agriculture 1989: McDowell County section; Brown 2007). He and his wife, Wilda E. Brown, now permanently occupy the farm and continue to raise some crops and a small herd of cattle upon it. Dr. Brown has restored bottomland damaged by the rising of the North Fork of the Catawba during storms of September 2004 and has continued to maintain and add to the wide variety of apple trees on the property. About twenty of the more than forty trees are heirloom varieties (Brown 2007).

Historic Architecture in McDowell County's North Cove and Surroundings

The Brown Farmstead is located in northern McDowell County along US 221, which runs north through the county to the North Cove valley and then continues north through a narrow gap in the mountains to the village of Linville Falls, where McDowell, Burke, and Avery counties meet. The three counties were settled contemporaneously and have similar architectural histories. Virtually all eighteenth-century buildings in the counties are believed to have been built of log. In the counties' small communities and valleys, such as Linville Falls and North Cove, as well as in the mountains, log construction remained popular well into the nineteenth century. The counties' log houses were generally small and modest, utilizing a single- or two-room plan supplemented by a loft. The houses were often expanded by an ell and some had a second pen or even a second story added (Alexander n.d.; Stevens n.d.; Cotton, Wylie, and Barbee 1987:16-18). Only one eighteenth-century log building is known to survive in the area, the one-room Henry Gillespie House in Turkey Cove—the valley bisected by US 221 immediately south of North Cove—which was likely erected about 1773 (Johnston 1992:50-51; Alexander n.d.). Within Turkey Cove, North Cove, and Linville Falls, three mid-nineteenth-century log houses still stand, as well as a few contemporary log outbuildings, among which are the smokehouse and granary at the Brown Farmstead (Brown 1994:VII-9).

Frame construction began to appear at yeoman farms in North Cove and other sections of McDowell and Burke counties in the early nineteenth century (Cotton, Wylie, and Barbee 1987:23-24; Alexander n.d.). The frame, single-pile, two-story A. Billy (or William Aiken) McCall House, in North Cove southwest of the Brown Farmstead, appears to have been built in the 1830s (Alexander 1985a). The earliest surviving frame dwelling in the cove, it couples a traditional hall-parlor plan with a relatively refined, Federal-style finish. By the mid nineteenth century in McDowell, Burke, and Avery counties, other two-story, one-room-deep, frame houses (I-houses) had generally expanded in size to a center-hall plan (Cotton, Wylie, and Barbee 1987:23-24; Alexander n.d.). A small number of center-hall-plan, frame I-houses survive in North Cove and the surrounding area. These include the c.1877 Albert J. Franklin House and two other Franklin family houses in Linville Falls in Burke County (Stevens and Thompson 1985; Burke County Historical Society 1981:191-192; Cotton, Wylie, and Barbee 1987:85-87); the McCall House in North Cove; and, also in North Cove, the William Jehu English House. The latter house, erected about 1886, was the homeplace of Mary Jane English Brown (Alexander 1985d). A few surviving, plainly finished,

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one-story, single-pile, gable-end dwellings were also erected in North Cove and surrounding areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Brown 1994:VII-12).

With frame construction in the late nineteenth century came a passion for ornate porches in the mountain counties of North Carolina (Bishir, Southern, and Martin 1999:63). This is quite evident in North Cove and Linville Falls. Many of the two-story late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century dwellings in these two communities are adorned with full-façade porches that are often topped by a balcony or a full upper tier. In the late nineteenth century, airy two-tier porches with an ornate Queen Anne-style finish became particularly popular throughout the otherwise architecturally conservative region. The fanciest surviving Queen Anne porches in North Cove are those of the English and McCall houses. The presence of all this woodwork was due in part to the decreasing isolation of Turkey Cove, North Cove, Linville Falls, and other communities in the region near the close of the century; the increased availability of mass-produced materials via railroads and improved roads; and increasing prosperity, particularly within rich agricultural valleys such as North Cove (Hood 1978:209).

Fancy woodwork was only a veneer, however. While the Queen Anne style became popular in the few built-up areas of the three counties, particularly Marion in McDowell County and Morganton in Burke County, the picturesque massing of house forms did not. The late nineteenth-century houses in North Cove, Linville Falls, and their surroundings may have displayed some Queen Anne trim, but their forms essentially remained rectilinear, constrained, and symmetrical, with occasional flourishes at bays and roofs.

Popular styles and forms, including the Colonial Revival, Craftsman, bungalow, and foursquare and boxy variants of the foursquare, came to the mountains and coves of the three counties in the early twentieth century, as they did elsewhere throughout the country, though again often in a more restrained fashion. The prosperous bottomland farmers of North Cove seized upon the foursquare form or its boxy variants for their new farmhouses. The Connelly-Phillips House (c.1906) (Alexander 1985c), Joseph Gilkey Brown House (1910) (Alexander 1985b), and Caldwell-Brown House (c.1912) (Blankenship 1994) are cubical, two-story, two-room-deep, hip-roofed dwellings. They are also frame and weatherboarded. The house at the Brown Farmstead is also boxy and hip-roofed, although it stands only a story-and-a-half high. It is the most intact of the four houses.

The basic boxy forms of these and other farmhouses in North Cove and its surroundings are enlivened by a few Queen Anne and Colonial Revival-style features and by the ubiquitous spacious porch often found at large mountain houses from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Queen Anne-style's disdain of the unbroken box finally penetrated North Cove in the early twentieth century, driving one- and two-story bays through the walls of the Connelly-Phillips, Caldwell-Brown, and Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown houses, among others. The Colonial Revival-style added two-story columned porticos to the Connelly-Phillips and Brown Farmstead houses and a two-tier pedimented porch to the otherwise severely finished Joseph Gilkey Brown House (Brown 1994:VII-15). It also became evident at gable roofs and dormers, trabeated entrances, and interiors with post-and-lintel mantels and straightforward finishes, as at the Brown Farmstead's house.

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With its two-story portico, decorative wraparound porch, projecting bays, rising dormers and chimney stacks, and high-hipped roof, the Brown house is a striking presence in North Cove, and exhibits the influence of both the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. The house is also notable for its little-altered and carefully finished interior. It is not grand, but it is also not plain or unconsidered. Its board walls, wainscoting, and ceilings are beaded. Its stair terminates upstairs and down at solid but decoratively turned newel posts. Its post-and-lintels mantels are finished, vigorously if not professionally, with chamfers, brackets, plinths, capitals, and recessed panels. The straightforward, center-hall, double-pile plan welcomed family and friends. Multiple rooms, and even part of the wide upstairs hall, served as sleeping quarters. Two parlors and a dining room served family and guests at meals and gatherings. The house was erected of lumber produced on the farm and Henry and Mary Jane Brown clearly lavished attention on its appearance, both to those viewing it from the valley floor and those living and invited inside.

North Cove's large, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century farmhouses generally retain at least a few frame outbuildings erected from the mid/late nineteenth century through the mid twentieth century. Functional frame buildings ranging from smokehouses and privies to stables and barns, they are plainly finished and clad in weatherboards or by vertical siding. Collections of frame outbuildings survive at the Joseph Gilkey Brown Farmstead, the William Jehu English Farmstead, and the William McCall Farmstead (Brown 1994:VII-15). The Brown Farmstead includes two frame outbuildings, its nineteenth-century mortise-and-tenon and frame barn and its early twentieth-century garage.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The National Register boundaries of the Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead are located within the southwestern portion of McDowell County Tax Map 1728, Block 52, Parcel 5297—the larger of the two tax parcels it currently occupies—and all of Tax Map 1728, Block 42, Parcel 8678, its other smaller parcel. At the northwest, the boundary follows the line of Parcel 8678 and terminates at US 221. At the southwest, the boundary also follows the line of Parcel 8678 and Parcel 5297. At the southeast, the boundary terminates at the northwestern edge of the right of way of Old Linville Road, across the North Fork of the Catawba River, rather than at Parcel 5297's termination at the edge of the railroad alignment. At the northeast, the boundary is more irregular. Beginning at US 221, it follows the line of Parcel 8678 along the northeast side of the farm's entry lane and then follows the northeastern turn that the Parcel 5297 makes, just above the 1920s garage and the section of the farm lane that heads into the fields. At the point where Parcel 5297 turns back northwest to US 221, the National Register boundary is extended as a straight line running southeast—through crop and pasture land and across the river—to the northern edge of the Old Linville Road right of way.

The total acreage included within these boundaries is approximately 21. They are depicted on the portion of McDowell County Tax Map 1728 that accompanies the nomination.

Boundary Justifications:

The boundaries of the Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead encompass a small portion of the extensive acreage historically associated with the farmstead. They are limited to all of a small parcel (Parcel 8678) and the southwestern portion of a larger parcel (Parcel 5297) that the farmstead presently occupies. They include the farmstead's three nineteenth-century outbuildings and its twentieth-century farmhouse and garage. They also include the site of the farmstead's original early nineteenth-century farmhouse. To the northeast of the house, within the entirety of Parcel 8678, they take in crop land. They do the same to the east of the house and outbuildings. To the south, they include crop land, pastureland, and the rocky course of the North Fork of the Catawba River. Much of this land continues to be used in a fashion similar to its historic use: for hay and sweet corn production; as pasture land for livestock grazing, complete with watering from the river; and for the non-commercial growing of numerous varieties of apples. The boundary to the southeast does not extend, as Parcel 5297 does, across Old Linville Road to the edge of the railroad alignment. This sliver of land between the road and the tracks has no agricultural appearance or use, but rather is essentially a grassy median and steep rocky buffer for the rail line. It has therefore been excised. The boundary also does not take in the northeastern portion of Parcel 5297. As the property is not significant in terms of the National Register for its agriculture, the boundary does not include all of the approximately 50 acres contained within its two current parcels, but rather is limited to approximately 21 acres. Encompassing the farmstead's five extant buildings, crop land, pastureland, and the North Fork of the Catawba River, these 21 acres place the farmstead in its historic context and allow it to retain its integrity of setting, feeling, and association.

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Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
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Photograph Labels

Common Information for Photos 1 through 10

1. Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
2. McDowell County, North Carolina
3. Marvin A. Brown
4. September 2007 (property is unaltered since taking of photographs)
5. URS Corporation-North Carolina, 1600 Perimeter Park Drive, Morrisville, NC 27560

Common Information for Photos 11 and 12

1. Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
2. McDowell County, North Carolina
3. Marvin A. Brown
4. November 2007 (property is unaltered since taking of photographs)
5. URS Corporation-North Carolina, 1600 Perimeter Park Drive, Morrisville, NC 27560

Descriptions of Views and Photograph Numbers

6. House—east front and north side elevations
7. **Photograph 1** of 12
6. House—north side and west rear elevations
7. **Photograph 2** of 12
6. House—south side and east front elevations
7. **Photograph 3** of 12
6. House—downstairs hall with stair at left and front entry at center
7. **Photograph 4** of 12
6. House—living room with dining room opening at right
7. **Photograph 5** of 12
6. House—upstairs hall looking toward door onto second-story porch
7. **Photograph 6** of 12
6. Looking north from southwest edge of boundary toward house and smokehouse at center and barn at right
7. **Photograph 7** of 12

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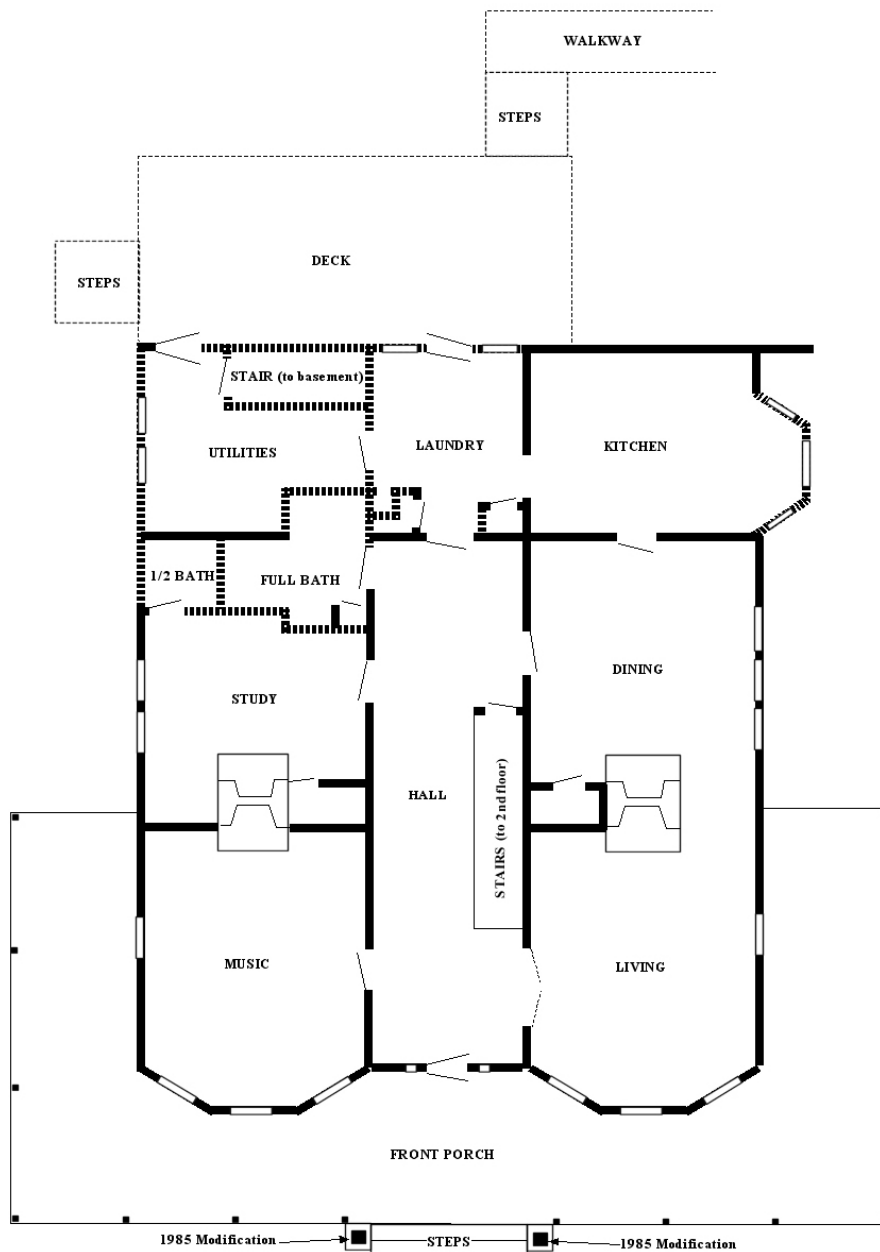
6. Looking southwest at smokehouse
7. **Photograph 8** of 12

6. Looking southwest at barn
7. **Photograph 9** of 12

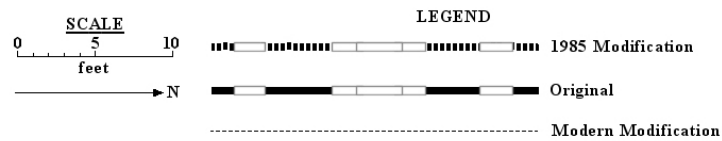
6. Looking northwest at barn; Dr. Henry S. Brown at left
7. **Photograph 10** of 12

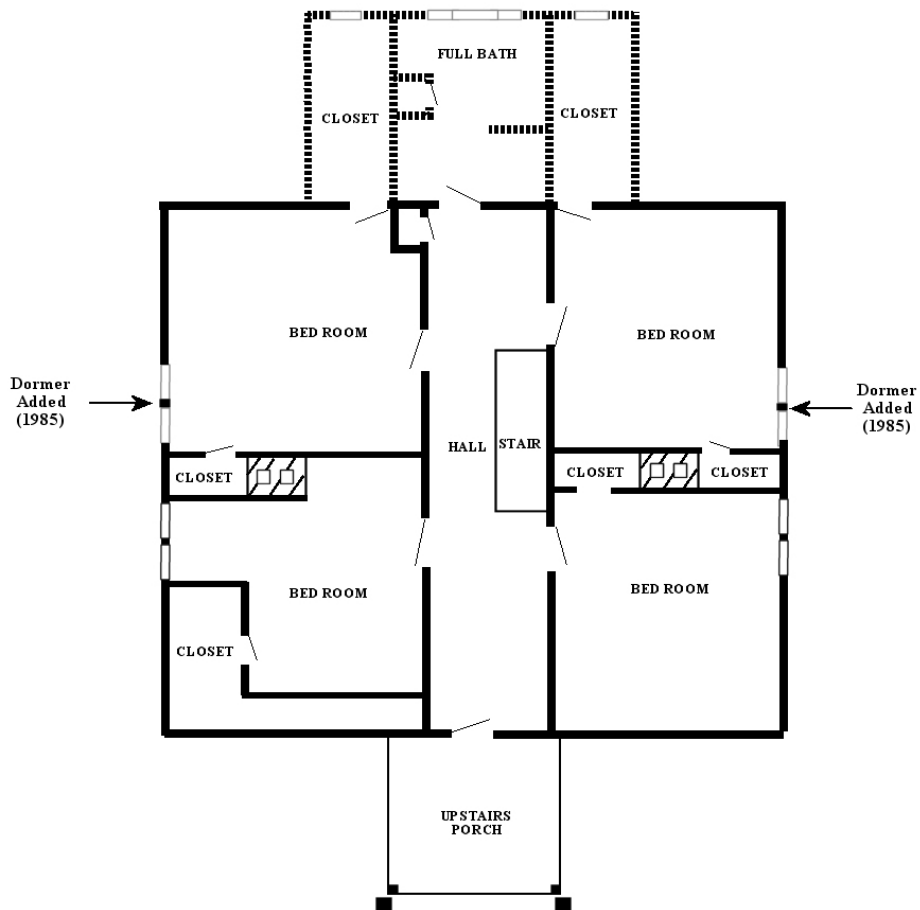
6. Looking southeast at garage
7. **Photograph 11** of 12

6. Looking west along North Fork of the Catawba River from near southeast boundary toward house, granary, and barn at center; modern house outside of boundary at far left
7. **Photograph 12** of 12

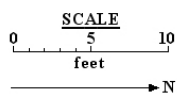


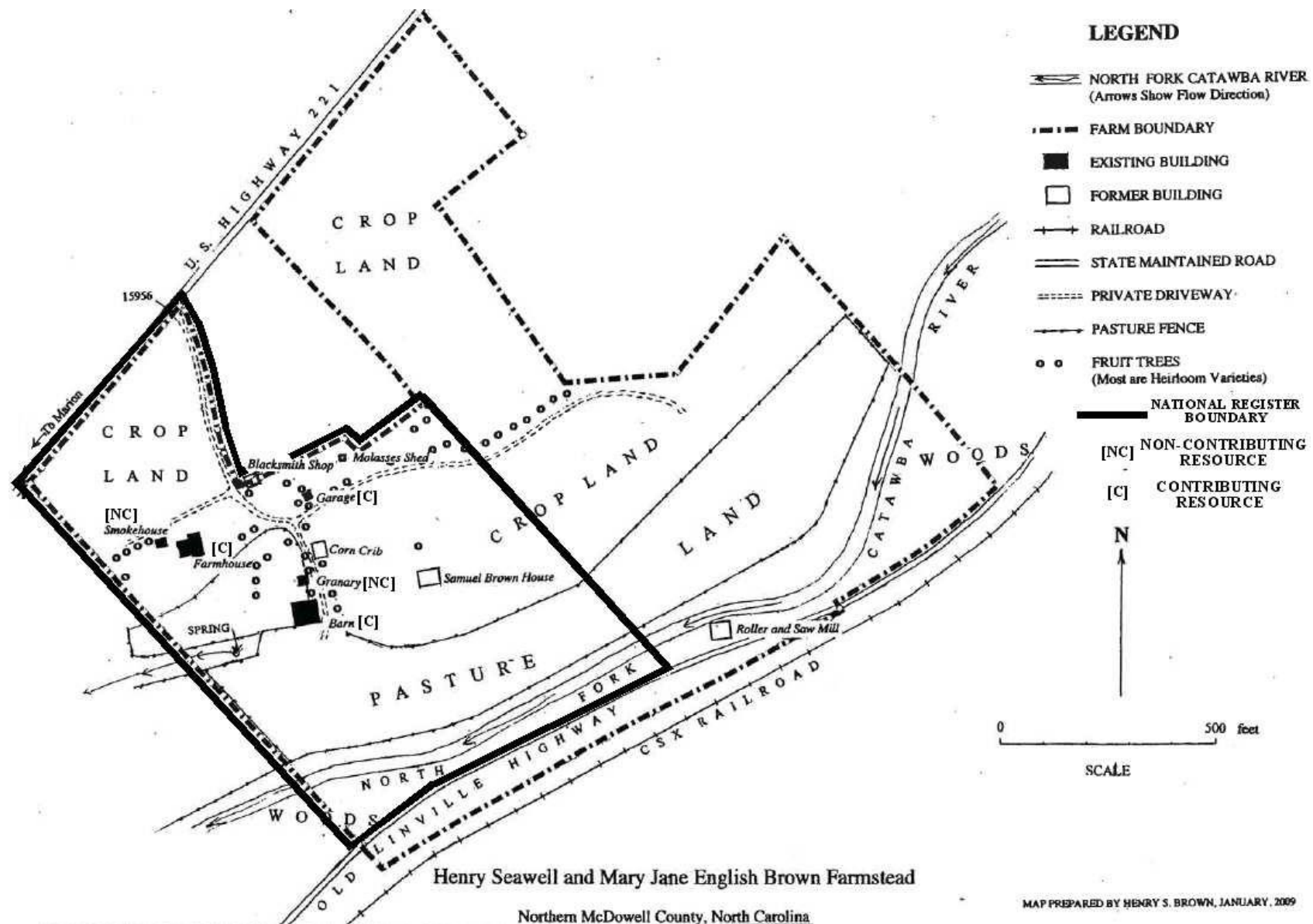
Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
 McDowell County, North Carolina
 First Floor Plan
 Floor Plan prepared by Henry S. Brown

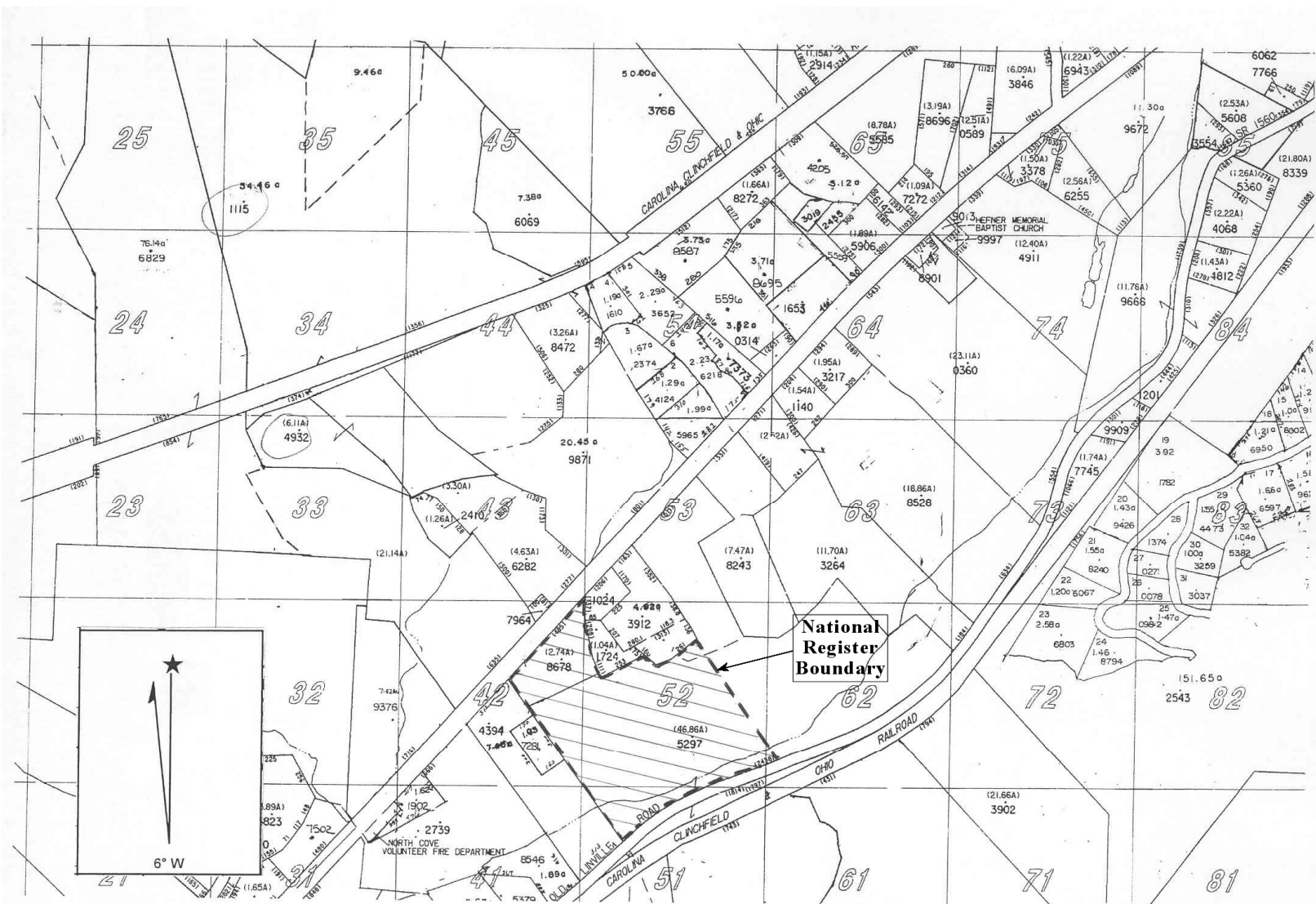




Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead
 McDowell County, North Carolina
 Second Floor Plan
 Floor Plan prepared by Henry S. Brown







Henry Seawell and Mary Jane English Brown Farmstead, McDowell County, North Carolina
 National Register Boundary
 (Base Map: portion of McDowell County, North Carolina tax map 1728)